

MISSILE TO BOMB CITY AFTER CITY PLANNED BY U.S.

Craft Could Drop Warheads
in Flight Over Enemy Land,
Defense Aide Discloses

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WASHINGTON, Dec. 13—A space vehicle that can drop off thermonuclear warheads city by city as it flies over enemy territory is being developed by the United States, a top Defense Department official said tonight.

John S. Foster Jr., Director of Defense Research and Engineering, said one of the craft, fired by a single missile, could carry "many individual re-entry vehicles with thermonuclear warheads." He referred to the craft as a "space bus."

Each warhead could be delivered to "a different city or, if desired, all can be delivered within one city," he said.

The vehicles would be carried by Minuteman 3 land-based and Poseidon submarine-launched missiles, he added.

Called Major Breakthrough

Mr. Foster, the Pentagon's top research official, thus added a new dimension—multi-city bombardment by a single weapon—to recent discussion of new United States and Soviet strategic weapons.

While work on multiple warheads for a single missile has been discussed publicly before, most official statements have indicated that the warheads would be directed at several targets within one small area.

Mr. Foster's disclosures

came in a speech prepared for delivery in Dallas and made available here by the Pentagon. He spoke before the Dallas chapter of the Association of the United States Army and the Dallas Council on World Affairs at the Sheraton-Dallas Hotel.

Counter to Soviet Union

He called the vehicle "a major breakthrough in missile technology" and said it was intended "to counter the Soviet deployment of additional ballistic missiles and defense against our ballistic missiles."

"After the main booster has cut off, the bus keeps making minute adjustments to its speed and direction and after each adjustment it ejects another warhead," Mr. Foster said.

Observers here believe these disclosures are intended at least partly to offset criticism of the Administration for refusing to deploy a full-scale anti-ballistic missile system to counter the threat of Soviet missiles. Secretary of Defense Robert S. McNamara has said that the only effective foil to the Soviet striking power is

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the counterthreat of American offensive missiles.

Mr. McNamara and Mr. Foster have used the same argument with respect to the recent Soviet development of a "fractional orbital bombing system (F.O.B.S.)," saying in effect that there is no shield against such a weapon and adding that the only answer to it is to have more American arrows.

A ballistic missile climbs 600 to 800 miles on a parabolic trajectory that makes it possible to track and intercept it with a defense missile. A F.O.B.S. weapon goes into a partial orbit of the earth at the relatively low altitude of 90 to 100 miles, which enables it to skip in under conventional missile radar warning systems.

The Administration has been criticized increasingly in recent months by those who fear Russia's buildup of offensive missiles, its deployment of anti-missiles and its development of the fractional orbital system.

While Mr. McNamara has said that the latter is not much of an added threat in view of Russia's other missile power, some lawmakers and others consider it an important potential "terror weapon" in a category with the German V-1 and V-2 rockets of World War II.

See Psychological Impact

These critics believe that the psychological impact of orbiting bombs or sub-orbital warheads that can evade all but the newest radar detection systems is too great to be ignored.

There was some speculation here tonight that the Pentagon is offering the new vehicle as its own "terror weapon" to counter talk of the fractional orbital system.

The multiple warhead development has been known until now as MIRV, for multiple, independently targeted re-entry vehicles.

The general impression has been that its warheads would be delivered in one area, like a load of buckshot. Mr. Foster's statement that the weapon can be delivered to a number of cities makes the MIRV approach sound more threatening and more difficult to counter than most observers here have believed it was.

Mr. Foster's speech indicated that the new vehicle, which he called a space bus, is still in the development stage. He described the new threat as two separate major developments—a "space bus" for the Minuteman 3 land-based missile and one for the Poseidon missile, which will replace Polaris missiles on submarines.

But he also lumped the two developments under the name of MIRV "for those of you who love acronyms," and under the term space bus "for others."

The new weapons on the Minuteman and Polaris "will multiply the capabilities of our missile systems manyfold," he said.

"They will assure penetration of Soviet anti-missile defenses and can deliver unacceptable damage to the Soviet Union even after we have suffered an all-out nuclear attack," he declared.

This ability to survive a first strike by an enemy and still destroy the enemy is the keystone of Pentagon strategic planning.